



Annotating a Text

Making annotations in a work of literature while reading can be a very useful source of documenting one's personal insight and can help the reader gain a better understanding of the author's purpose. Annotations also provide a roadmap from which to work should it be required of the reader to return to the text for further analysis/reference. Making annotations is a way to self-monitor to insure the reader is thinking critically about the text. It allows the reader to confirm or dispute ideas, question the appropriateness or accuracy of a statement, uncover bias, or even challenge a writer's conclusions. It forces the reader to have a sense of academic awareness about the task at hand, as opposed to merely reading for pleasure (*which is not a bad thing by any means!*). Consider the following checklist for reading to assist with making annotations:

- ☐ Does the writer/character provide any information about his or her background? If so, how does this information affect you as the reader?
- ☐ Are there parallels between the writer/character's experience and your own?
- ☐ What is the writer's purpose? How can you tell?
- ☐ Who is the author really addressing through the work? Who is the intended audience? How can you tell?
- ☐ What are the text's most important ideas? What support does the writer provide for them?
- ☐ What information can you learn from the text's introduction and conclusion?
- ☐ Are there clearly events which are foreshadowed? How are they linked and how does this add to or detract from the development and enjoyment of the plot?
- ☐ What key words and/or phrases are repeated? What does this repetition tell you about the writer's purpose and emphasis?
- ☐ How would you characterize the writer's tone?
- ☐ Where do you agree with the writer? Where do you disagree?
- ☐ How does the writer's use of imagery, symbolism, metaphor, and/or selective vocabulary improve or detract from your experience as the reader?
- ☐ How does the author effectively use characterization to achieve a purpose?
- ☐ What, if anything, is not clear to you?